

## EMPOWERMENT: A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CRITICAL LEADER CORE COMPETENCY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**EMPOWERMENT: A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CRITICAL LEADER CORE COMPETENCY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Our Army does not fully espouse, exercise or integrate empowerment into leadership practices and leader developmental processes, as a result we are not maximizing the full potential of leaders at all levels. This issue is critical due to the fact that the current and emerging nature of conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires leaders that are multifaceted, agile, and adaptive<sup>1</sup>. Army leaders at all levels must be capable of executing decentralized operations for extended periods with no direct oversight and possess the talent and skills to lead across the full spectrum of conflict. Given this situation the concept of empowerment emerges as a critical leader core competency in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and highlights the need for the Army to modify the officer education system, doctrine and re examine certain aspects of our culture that constrain empowerment. This paper provides recommendations for the Army to consider in addressing these issues and seeks to assist senior leaders in preparing subordinates for the challenges associated with leading Soldiers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.





## EMPOWERMENT: A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY LEADER CRITICAL CORE COMPETENCY

Our Army does not fully espouse, exercise or integrate empowerment into leadership practices and leader developmental processes, as a result we are not maximizing the full potential of leaders at all levels. This issue is critical due to the fact that the current and emerging nature of conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires leaders that are multifaceted, agile, and adaptive<sup>2</sup>. Army leaders at all levels must be comfortable, confident and capable of executing decentralized operations for extended periods with no direct oversight and possess the talent and skills to lead across the full spectrum of conflict. Given this situation the concept of empowerment emerges as a critical leader core competency in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and highlights the need for the Army to modify the officer education system, doctrine and re examine certain aspects of our culture that constrain empowerment. This paper provides recommendations for the Army to consider in addressing these issues and seeks to assist senior leaders in preparing subordinates for the challenges associated with leading Soldiers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The purpose of this Strategic Research Project (SRP) is to examine the vital role empowerment has in developing 21<sup>st</sup> century Army leaders. The end result of this SRP will identify methods and recommendations to better integrate the concept of empowerment into existing doctrine, the officer education system and Army culture in order to better prepare Army leaders for challenges, threats and opportunities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In pursuit of this outcome, this paper will focus on five main areas of emphasis. First it is important to briefly describe the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment as this will prove beneficial in advocating the concept of empowerment. The paper will then focus on

defining empowerment and its relevance in developing emerging Army strategic leaders. The paper will study cultural impediments that constrain empowerment and examine how the Army currently addresses empowerment with respect to doctrine, the officer education system, Army culture and the officer evaluation reporting system. The paper will then study empowerment theories outside of the military to identify what external ideas are relevant and useful for Army leader development methods. Finally the paper will conclude by providing recommendations that will enable the Army to better espouse empowerment in preparing leaders for future challenges.

#### Characterizing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Environment

Persistent conflict and constant change characterize the 21<sup>st</sup> century global environment and protracted confrontation between states, nations, non state actors and individual groups is highly likely.<sup>3</sup> These actors will use violence and threaten the use of violence to achieve political, religious and other ideological goals. Globalization will create increased prosperity between nation states and accelerate the redistribution of wealth and power resulting in a wider disparity between those that have and those that have not.<sup>4</sup> Terrorist organizations that are accountable to nothing other than their own ideologies and causes will further complicate this volatile environment. Other factors of influence such as, projected population growth, unpredictable natural disasters, climate change, resource scarcity, failed and failing states with ungoverned territory and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction<sup>5</sup> all combine to create an environment that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.<sup>6</sup>

In response to these conditions, the nation will continue to rely primarily on land forces, with the Army in the lead, to preserve, protect and advance national interests

while simultaneously shaping the strategic environment and responding decisively to global challenges.<sup>7</sup> As a result the Army must be prepared to conduct full spectrum operations in diverse environments over prolonged periods. Leadership is the most dynamic element of combat power<sup>8</sup> and the ability of the Army to fulfill these daunting tasks is heavily dependent on leadership. Empowered leaders are required now more than ever and will continue to prove the decisive corner-stone of the Army's success.

Throughout the history of the Army, leaders have proven incredibly capable and today's Army leaders exemplify that fact. Leadership development programs, existing doctrine, and most importantly, on the job training and experience stemming from the challenges associated with Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) have produced a generation of Army leaders that are unmatched in skill, talent, character and courage. Today's Army leaders have led Soldiers with distinction and the systems currently in place that produce leaders of character are far from broken. Much of the Army's success in the development of quality leaders is directly attributable to the fact that it constantly seeks to improve. Any organization that is committed to excellence will always find merit and value in chances to improve and will actively take advantage of those opportunities. Improvement does not imply that a current approach is deficient rather it at times manifests itself as another approach to professional commitment. Therefore it is relevant and useful for the Army to modify the manner in which it communicates the idea of empowerment as it pertains to the development of leaders. Understanding, exercising and inculcating the true essence of empowerment into Army leaders at all levels will ensure the continued success.

### Empowerment Defined

Empowerment in its pure textbook definition is to give official authority or legal power.<sup>9</sup> This formal and academic definition of empowerment does not completely capture the intent behind empowering subordinates as it fails to express the true essence of empowerment. A much more applicable characterization advocates that empowerment is a process that challenges our assumptions about the way things are and can be. It challenges our basic assumptions about power through helping, achieving, and succeeding. At the core of the concept of empowerment is the idea of power. The possibility of empowerment and application of power depends on two things. Empowerment requires power to change. If power cannot change, because it is inherent in positions or people, then empowerment isn't possible. Second, empowerment depends on the idea that power can expand.<sup>10</sup> Power changes and expands when making decisions and determining outcomes is shared between the leader and the led.

The potential inherent in this thought represents incredible opportunity for Army leaders at all levels. In this description of empowerment the thought of helping, achieving and succeeding becomes just as important as providing purpose, direction and motivation<sup>11</sup>. Empowerment as it applies to Army leaders, is relinquishing or surrendering power by sharing authority with subordinates with respect to influencing outcomes while simultaneously retaining the inherent responsibility for the well being and welfare of a unit.

The degree in which a leader empowers their subordinates is based on influence versus oversight. The primary factor that determines whether or not a leader exercises influence or oversight is a leader's "comfort level" in a given circumstance. For example,

an infantry battalion commander is more likely to exert influence over a subordinate during the execution of a marksmanship range than he would over the subordinate executing voter registration operations in Afghanistan. The difference between these two examples is familiarity and comfort. Circumstances are further shaped by risks, the experience levels of subordinates and situational awareness. In short, a leader is more likely to truly empower by relinquishing power and authority of action to subordinates when they are comfortable doing so. When this is the case, the leader will exert influence over a circumstance in a manner that does not constrain initiative. In contrast, when a leader is uncomfortable in a given circumstance they tend to exert more oversight and will not fully empower subordinates.

#### Current and Future Strategic Implications

Developing empowerment skills in leaders at all levels has strategic implications for two primary reasons. First, Army leaders at all levels will make decisions that have strategic implications in both current and future operating environments.

In an era where every leader's decisions carry strategic implications, leaders must be able to accommodate tactical actions within a larger context. In short, they must be risk takers who know how to think as well as what to think<sup>12</sup>. Developing empowerment skills early in a leader's career is important because it conditions them overtime to rely on their own critical and creative thinking skills.

The three block war characterization<sup>13</sup> of the complex nature of the contemporary operating environment (COE) as outlined by Former Marine Commandant General Krulac exemplifies this thought. One moment Soldiers will feed refugees and provide humanitarian relief. A few hours later these Soldiers will separate fighting warlords.

Later that day, they might become engaged in mid-intensity conflict. All of this will take place within three city blocks<sup>14</sup>. The decisions that junior leaders make in these circumstances will have strategic implications. In all three dimensions, leaders must have the knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes to understand the implications of their actions.

The second significant reason is that given the current fight strategic Army leaders must empower subordinates because the nature of conflict is too dynamic to exercise direct oversight. Leaders need to share power with their subordinates, peers, and constituents<sup>15</sup>. They must have the willingness and ability to involve others and elicit participation based on the subordinate's knowledge and skills, because tasks will be too complex and information too widely distributed for leaders to solve problems independently. This factor highlights the requirement to develop empowerment skills throughout the duration of an Army leader's career, as these skills cannot be developed overnight.

#### Army Cultural Impediments to Empowerment

Culture is a set of reliable, stable, basic and shared practices and values that help human societies and groups answer two important questions<sup>16</sup>-How to survive, adapt, and grow and how to internally integrate in order to function on a daily basis in a manner that ensures the capacity or ability to adapt and survive<sup>17</sup>. The Army's culture and ethos are centered on the warrior creed, the winning spirit, Army values and service to a greater cause. Army culture demands that leaders possess the mental agility, character and courage to lead from the front with conviction and honor. Common institutional vernacular such as follow me, when in charge take charge, and having a

can do attitude coupled with lead, develop and achieve combine to define Army leaders and influence behavior when placed in positions of authority.

The combination of institutional expectations, inculcated cultural beliefs, leadership doctrine, and long standing traditions have overtime conditioned Army leaders to exert oversight as opposed to influence. This is not always related to a lack of trust in subordinates, toxic leadership<sup>18</sup>, or micromanagement, rather it results from leaders feeling intensely responsible for the overall well being, welfare and safety of those they are charged with leading. This may appear to be an issue of trust. For most leaders though it isn't a matter of trusting a subordinate based on reliability or moral and ethical considerations. The issue centers on leaders not being capable of trusting a subordinate to solve a problem or accomplish a task based on that leader's fear of the subordinate failing. This is due to leaders simply being uncomfortable or unwilling to surrender their desire and conviction to a subordinate. This thought is contrary to how leaders have been conditioned to behave over time and is not aligned with perceived institutional and cultural expectations of leaders.

Surrendering will and conviction to a subordinate is uncomfortable for a leader because it places their own steward like relationship with their organization at risk. The overwhelming feeling of responsibility that leaders have for their organization often constrains their ability to empower subordinates and accentuates the fact that Army culture is highly dependent on control, stability and internal maintenance consistent with a hierarchal culture.<sup>19</sup>

The ideas previously cited are manifested in common practices and regulations in the Army that are vital but have a doubled edged sword effect on both leaders and

subordinates as they can constrain and limit both target audiences. A great example is the degree of oversight exercised by the psychological (PSYOP) and information operations (IO) communities that constrain commanders by mandating that products produced to influence designated target audiences be cleared through high level command before being distributed<sup>20</sup>. This oversight results in untimely distribution of products and severely constrains a commander's ability to influence operations and proves too cumbersome to support emerging requirements in their battle space. The collateral effect of this constraining procedure has detrimental effects particularly in modern conflict.

Subtly and presumably unintentionally, Army doctrine inculcates this dynamic. The preface to Field Manual (FM) 6-22 demonstrates this by stating "as the keystone leadership manual for the United States Army, FM 6-22 establishes leadership doctrine, the fundamental principles by which Army leaders act to accomplish their mission and care for their people".<sup>21</sup> By stating in doctrine, "their mission" and "their people", the FM begins to condition leaders to think the success of any unit they lead is their sole responsibility and is contrary to the idea of shared responsibility. This premise is further expanded in the first sentence of a rifle company commander's duty description that states; "company commander of a 130 man rifle company, responsible for all the company does or fails to do".<sup>22</sup> These examples lead to hierarchal ownership of problem solving as opposed to shared ownership.

As Army leaders advance and are promoted due to demonstrated potential and performance there can be a natural inclination for successful officers to unintentionally and unconsciously develop egocentric tendencies that are contrary to empowerment.



Egocentric tendencies emerge when leaders based on perceived success regard themselves and their opinions as more important than the opinions of others. Constant institutional reinforcement pertaining to the effectiveness of a given officer in many cases encourages an absolute frame of reference within a given and specific point of view.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, egocentrism leads to a superior belief that is not conducive to considering other diverse points of view.<sup>24</sup>

The examples provided in the preceding paragraphs are aligned with three of nine cultural dimensions described by the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavioral Effectiveness research project (GLOBE).<sup>25</sup> The first of these applicable cultural dimensions affecting empowerment is assertiveness<sup>26</sup>. The GLOBE project describes this dimension as the degree of assertiveness<sup>27</sup> an organization views as acceptable. The Army's culture is heavily reliant on assertiveness.<sup>28</sup> In the Army, follow me, when in charge take charge and lead from the front attitudes are aligned with a more assertive culture and as a result, conditions leaders to become dominant as it applies to decision making. While these attributes are important leadership traits, routine and consistent use of these traits can result in leader dominance of problem solving. Negative aspects associated with a culture that practices assertiveness are, having a can do attitude, a belief that individuals are in control, exercising control over their environment, and emphasizing results over relationships<sup>29</sup>. All of these traits are contrary to the idea of empowerment. Equally disturbing is the fact that subordinates influenced by this situation are conditioned to expect leaders to solve problems and as a result marginalize and limit their own potential.

The next applicable GLOBE cultural dimension is uncertainty avoidance<sup>30</sup>. Over time our culture has conditioned leaders to avoid uncertainty which is demonstrated in a number of different ways as described above. Not allowing subordinates to make decisions stifles initiative and is directly related to uncertainty avoidance as the leader is not sure what the outcome or end state of decisions made by subordinates will be. Instead leaders direct subordinates into courses of action that have already proven effective to reduce uncertainty in the outcome.

The third GLOBE dimension of culture that impedes empowerment is power distance. Power distance is the extent in which an organization accepts and endorses authority, power differences and status privileges<sup>31</sup>. The sources of power primarily associated with power distance in the Army are legitimate and referent power that are granted to leaders as a result of position and the sentiments of the led.

The hierarchal nature of the Army lends itself to a high power distance culture, however, the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment calls for decentralized action and decision making, which is contrary to a high power distance organization. Power distance reduction in organizations leads to employee beliefs in self efficacy, self control, work satisfaction and enhances growth and productivity.<sup>32</sup>

#### The Army's Current Approach towards Empowerment (Doctrine, Education, Evaluation)

Empowerment isn't listed in the table of contents in FM 6-22, the Army's keystone field manual on leadership.<sup>33</sup> The manual's first and only significant description and reference of the concept of empowerment is contained eleven pages deep in chapter 3, that addresses leadership roles, levels and teams.<sup>34</sup> The section discusses empowering subordinates with emphasis on the importance of competent leaders

creating a solid organization by empowering subordinates. The section then connects empowerment to mistakes that subordinates will assuredly make and emphasizes the importance of leaders conducting after action reviews to ensure learning occurs from mistakes.

This is in keeping with long standing norms within Army culture and infers the outcome of delegating authority and relinquishing power is correcting mistakes as opposed to a more viable means of accomplishing an assigned task or mission. The section then transitions to empowerment and its benefits in developing subordinates. This thought is then linked to the risks inherent in doing so by stating that leaders should be willing to take calculated risks when empowering subordinates.

The section concludes by addressing the negative effects associated with leaders that fail to empower subordinates and is directly linked to the thoughts addressed in the cultural impediments portion of this paper. The issue associated with the manner in which empowerment is conveyed in FM 6-22 is the emphasis on mistakes and risks as opposed to viable alternatives, shared responsibility and influencing outcomes.

One of the most prominent cornerstones of Army's leadership doctrine is the leadership requirements model that communicates expectations of leaders and defines roles.<sup>35</sup> The model segregates leader requirements into two categories, attributes and core competencies. Stated attributes are communicated in terms of character, presence and capacity and align sub components to each. Core leader competencies describe the significance of leading, developing and achieving. Empowerment, is notably absent from the leadership requirements model.

In addressing how to best employ Army capability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Army recently published FM 3-24 that conveys Counter-insurgency (COIN) doctrine. The manual places significant emphasis on the concept of empowerment and highlights that successful mission command results from subordinate leaders at all echelons exercising disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to accomplish missions. Mission oriented command provides subordinates with a mission, intent, a concept of operations, and adequate resources. Commanders empower subordinates to make decisions within the commander's intent. They leave the details of execution to their subordinates and expect them to use initiative and judgment to accomplish the mission. Mission command is ideally suited to the mosaic nature of COIN operations. Local commanders have the best grasp of their situations and the various methodologies they must employ to accomplish the mission. Under mission command, they are given access to or control of the resources needed to produce timely intelligence, conduct effective operations, and manage information. As a result, effective COIN operations are decentralized in nature and higher echelon commanders owe it to their subordinates to push as many capabilities as possible down to their subordinates. Mission command encourages initiative and facilitates learning that must occur at every level.<sup>36</sup>

FM 3-24 clearly articulates concepts associated with the employment of Army capabilities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment and represents the type of change required to address current and emerging threats, challenges and opportunities. As the manual indicates empowerment is an important requirement in achieving success and highlights the pressing need to better integrate empowerment principles and concepts into FM 6-22, the Army's premiere manual on leadership.

The skills our leaders rely on and have developed with respect to the previous mentioned circumstances have evolved as a result of experience and immersion in an environment in which micro management is impossible and empowerment is vital. Conversely the authoritarian and constraining garrison environments dominated by oversight and control are contrary to the nature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century operating environment. This produces an almost bi-polar like phenomenon for Army leaders who in combat environments are entrusted and empowered with near infinite freedom of action and then upon return to their home station are placed in garrison environments that are overly constrained with bureaucratic policies and procedures. The nature of operations in the 21st century and the criticality of empowerment warrant a review of constraining garrison policies and procedures.

The Officer Education System (OES) is vital to the development of Army officers. Throughout the history of our institution the OES has proven decisive in maintaining leader relevancy and developing Values, Attributes, Skills and Actions (VASA)<sup>37</sup> in Army leaders. The overarching goal of the collective Army OES is to produce an officer corps of broadly based officers that 1) are fully competent in technical, tactical and leader VASA; 2) knowledgeable of how the Army runs; 3) demonstrate, confidence, integrity, critical judgment and responsibility; 4) can operate in an environment of complexity, ambiguity and suspect to constant change; 5) can build teams amongst continuous organizational and technological change; and 6) can adapt and solve problems creatively<sup>38</sup>.

In reviewing current curriculums and programs of instruction within the Army OES, specific target audiences of emphasis emerge as important pertaining to teaching

and developing empowerment skills. These target audiences, Captains, Majors, and Lieutenant Colonels, represent current and emerging future senior leaders in our Army and will continue to prove decisive in leading our Army well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The specific Program of Instruction (POI) for the Maneuver Captains Career Course includes a wide range of relevant subject matter areas divided into separate modules to include a leadership module that is executed in Phase II of the course and sub divided into six lessons. The lessons include, a Company Command seminar that deals with Rules of Engagement and Rules of the use of Force, developing subordinates, taking charge of a unit, cohesion, ethical decision making and Army family team building. All of this subject matter is necessary in the development of junior leaders. Absent however from this curriculum is any direct instruction on empowerment.<sup>39</sup>

The primary Army educational program associated with the development of Majors and Lieutenant Colonels is the Command and General Staff College (currently designated as Intermediate Level Education (ILE)). This program is designed to educate promotable Captains and Majors in the values and practice of the profession of arms. It emphasizes tactical and operational skills required for war-fighting at the corps and division levels. Graduates are recognized by military education level (MEL) code 4 and students also receive credit for Joint Professional Military Education Phase I<sup>40</sup>. The current ILE POI<sup>41</sup> includes 26 hours of dedicated instruction pertaining to leadership taught over two blocks of instruction. Important to this segment of instruction is the concept of organizational development and the decisive link it has between direct and strategic leadership. In pursuit of this outcome, topics of study include, leading change,

leader development, knowledge management, organizational learning, group and team development, developing networks, critical and creative thinking, and communications, influence and negotiations. Absent from this curriculum is any discussion or emphasis on empowerment. The results of a leadership survey conducted at Fort Leavenworth, in which 760 mid career officers (Majors and LTCs) cited that a lack of empowerment for Captains and Company Commanders was a contributing factor associated with captain attrition,<sup>42</sup> highlight the need to modify ILE curriculum.

The final significant area of emphasis associated with leader development is the current officer evaluation reporting system. This system evaluates the performance and potential of officers in the grade of Warrant Officer thru Major General. The system also identifies those officers best qualified for promotion and assignment to positions of higher responsibility, and identifies officers who should be kept on active duty, those who should be retained in grade, and those who should be eliminated.<sup>43</sup>

The primary form associated with the assessment and evaluation of officer performance is Department of the Army (DA) Form 67-9 the officer evaluation report (OER). This report aligns section IV (Performance Evaluation and Professionalism) of the report with the principles associated with VASA in assessing an officer's performance.<sup>44</sup> Criterion for assessment and evaluation include the following categories: mental, emotional, physical (attributes); conceptual, interpersonal, technical, tactical (skills); and influencing, communicating, decision making, motivating (actions). All of these criteria have applicability, however absent from this list of evaluative criteria is empowerment.<sup>45</sup>

A review of the previous examined areas of emphasis pertaining to officer development reveal a void in emphasis specific to the significance of empowerment and highlight the potential for improvement. Improvement in these areas will prove necessary in the development of officers capable of leading through the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Other Empowerment Theories and Practices

The term empowerment has different meanings in different social, cultural and political contexts. Several different views, descriptions and ideas pertaining to the term are found in academic settings around the world that lead to a number of different interpretations and applications. These descriptions range from self-strength, self control, self-power, self-reliance, own choice, life of dignity in accordance with one's values, capable of fighting for one's rights, independence, own decision making, being free, awakening, and capability<sup>46</sup>. The common denominator that clearly demonstrates the significance of the idea is that all of these descriptions are embedded in value and belief systems of communities, businesses, churches governments and an array of other professional entities.

The World Bank is one of the most prominent organizations that studies and practices the concept of empowerment within their discipline. The organization defines empowerment as the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.<sup>47</sup> The organization's strategy specific to the application of empowerment centers on four key elements that inspire institutional reform.



The first key element is access to information. The premise associated with this element is associated with two way information flow between citizens and governments and its significance in creating opportunities for both partners. This concept is useful for Army leaders as it highlights the importance of information sharing and its benefit in creating opportunity and reducing uncertainty.

The next key element is inclusion and participation. Inclusion and participation is an empowering approach that treats people and governments as co-producers pertaining to control over priority setting and decision making. Central to this idea is a commitment to change and the requirement to develop mechanisms to facilitate consistent dialogue. This element highlights the significance of soliciting input and feedback from subordinates in decision making<sup>48</sup>. This concept is vital for our Army because it advocates and enables power sharing and the delegation of decision making.

The next key element is accountability. This element relates to governments being held accountable for the policies that affect their citizens. It focuses on policies in an effort to ensure they are fair and provide opportunity for all citizens<sup>49</sup>. This has application as Army leaders are accountable to their subordinates. When placed in the context of empowerment, placing more emphasis on empowerment through doctrine and evaluation processes will allow the Army to benefit from holding leaders accountable in ensuring empowerment is implemented.

The final key element is Local organizational capacity which refers to the ability of people to work together, organize, and mobilize resources to solve problems of common interest. Often outside the reach of formal systems, people turn to each other

for support and strength to solve everyday problems. This element represents the power of cohesion that is developed over-time in organizations and units that recognize the power of their members input.

Another useful theory that has application to empowerment within the Army is found in the 12<sup>th</sup> law of leadership as communicated by John Maxwell. The 12<sup>th</sup> law of leadership is the law of empowerment. This law advocates that only secure leaders can give power.<sup>50</sup> A secure leader who can give power away will make their organization more powerful. The theory goes on to further advocate that only empowered people reach their full potential and if a leader fails to empower subordinates they create barriers within the organization that cannot be overcome.<sup>51</sup> Maxwell further articulates that there are three impediments to the law of empowerment.

The first impediment is job security. A weak leader that is concerned with job security is incapable of empowering subordinates because they fear they will become dispensable.<sup>52</sup> Conversely, the law of empowerment argues that the only way for a leader to become indispensable is to actually become dispensable by empowering others. Empowering subordinates allows subordinates to develop and therefore become less dependent on leaders. Espousing this belief actually makes leaders even more valuable to an organization. This concept is closely aligned with the previously discussed cultural dimension of power distance. As leaders reduce the degree of oversight exercised in units they simultaneously embolden subordinates and thereby lessen the power distance in organizations.

The next impediment to the law of empowerment is resistance to change. Empowerment by its nature brings change in power and authority. Empowerment

encourages subordinates to grow and become stakeholders in organizations. Through empowerment change is possible and change is the price of progress.<sup>53</sup>

The final impediment associated with the law of empowerment is a lack of self worth. This idea suggests that people gain worth through their occupation. The law of empowerment advocates change in power and change threatens self worth if a leader is resistant to change. For leaders with confidence, change acts as a stimulus and is embraced because empowerment motivates people.<sup>54</sup> Our Army is dependent on the ability of leaders to set conditions that facilitate motivation in subordinates.

Trust and self confidence are necessary requirements associated with empowerment. Without trust there can be no self confidence or confidence in others and without trust empowerment is not possible, because empowerment comes out of confidence in the ability of others.<sup>55</sup> Empowerment is the granting of authority that is equal to responsibility and is not doing your own thing. In organizations where authority and responsibility are misaligned empowerment is impossible.

Facilitating empowerment in subordinates enables leaders to increase the chances and odds that a job will be well done. This is primarily due to the fact that the problem is solved and jobs are completed by those that are close to the requirement and by someone who has to live with the results.<sup>56</sup> An equally strong case for empowerment is that leaders that empower subordinates have more time to focus on decisions and challenges in line with their positions and not making decisions that belong to subordinates. This idea is very applicable within the Army, given the large demands placed on a senior leader's time.

The broad based empowerment theory, as outlined by John P. Kotter in his book *Leading Change*, is applicable to the Army leader. This theory professes that many of the same kinds of organizational attributes needed to develop leadership are also required to empower subordinates and workers. These include flatter hierarchies, less bureaucracy, and a greater willingness to take risks.<sup>57</sup> The theory goes on to add that constant empowerment works best in organizations where leaders delegate managerial tasks to subordinates<sup>58</sup>. In the context of the Army this is very applicable as senior leaders are often constrained and yoked by mundane meetings that are merely focused on conveying statistical data pertaining to readiness rates, administrative reporting and other information that is best handled and managed by subordinates.

The final leadership theory that has merit in the context of the Army when examining empowerment is Peter Senge's theory of mental models.<sup>59</sup> Mental models are people's preconceived notions, beliefs, and ideas that shape the manner in which individuals make sense of the world and take action.<sup>60</sup> Mental models are powerful in leaders because they influence action and decision making. Army leaders must pay close attention in managing their mental models and take caution in assessing subordinate capabilities and behaviors that are not aligned with their own mental model. When this occurs, leaders will disregard viable alternative solutions and they will not embrace diversity in thought with respect to decision making.

Common vernacular used in the Army such as in and out groups or inner circles<sup>61</sup> highlight the potential impact mental models have on leaders and their ability to remain open minded and make well thought out decisions. If senior leaders are not aware of their mental models they may unintentionally surround themselves with subordinates

that fit their mental model which can lead to cookie cutter approaches to problem solving that overlook and disregard other different and potentially more viable alternatives and solutions.

### Recommendations for Consideration

The three specific areas of emphasis examined in this paper associated with how the Army currently espouses empowerment all combine to contribute to the underpinnings of Army culture. As a result, modifying and improving in these areas as it pertains to the idea and concept of empowerment represents a need for cultural change. By changing and modifying the OES, Army Doctrine and the Officer Evaluation Reporting System, the Army will use both embedding and reinforcing mechanisms to affect cultural change<sup>62</sup>. The first mechanism associated with embedding mechanisms is changing what Army leaders consider important and senior Army leaders must initiate the needed change by paying more attention to empowerment.

Senior leaders can first change how the Army pays attention to empowerment by modifying existing doctrine. To begin with, the leadership requirements model<sup>63</sup> must change to include empowerment as a core competency. Tenants associated with this core competency include; shared responsibility, influencing outcomes, enabling subordinate growth and development, underwriting mistakes and assuming risks. To further embolden and institutionalize this core competency, the Army must dedicate at least an entire chapter in FM 6-22 to communicate ideas, attitudes and beliefs pertaining to empowerment in the Army. Direct links must be made to FM 3-24 and the Army's posture statement that both emphasize the nature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the demand it will place on decentralized operations over a prolonged period.

Senior Army leaders should also focus on deliberate role modeling, teaching, and on coaching subordinates during professional correspondence with colleagues and subordinates.<sup>64</sup> Senior leaders can use leader professional development sessions, strategic communications, point papers and an array of other communication methods to convey the importance and significance of empowerment.

Co-opting professionals outside of the military to share experiences and empowerment theories with senior Army leaders is another potential method of emphasizing empowerment. In considering what empowerment theories best align with the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Army, John Maxwell's law of empowerment<sup>65</sup>, the World Bank's four key elements associated with inspiring institutional reform<sup>66</sup>, and Senge's mental modeling theory<sup>67</sup> are all worthy of consideration.

Army leaders can emphasize the importance of empowerment in the Army, by mandating modifications to existing curriculums associated with leadership at the Captains Career Course and ILE. Specific terminal learning objectives associated with leadership instruction must facilitate a common understanding of empowerment, the critical role empowerment plays in the 21st century, and integrate real world vignettes that spotlight the essence of empowerment in practice by today's Army leaders.

Another embedding mechanism that will influence change is to modify how the Army allocates rewards and status<sup>68</sup>. Specifically, the Army must include empowerment as an evaluated competency in part VIb (Performance Evaluation and Professionalism) of DA Form 67-9.<sup>69</sup> Empowerment is best integrated into the OER as both a skill and action. When communicated as a skill it is useful for the Army to gauge and assess the effectiveness of officers as it applies to showing skill in understanding the concept and

idea of empowerment, and possessing the personal confidence to empower subordinates. As an action, empowerment is best gauged by displaying the ability to delegate appropriate authority and responsibility to subordinates.

The final recommendation suggested in this paper is the use of a formal statement of organizational philosophy as a reinforcing mechanism<sup>70</sup> as it applies to inculcating empowerment into Army culture. The Army must include empowerment in dialogue associated with describing and articulating 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. This must be done by senior leaders during the execution of leadership conferences, testimonies to congress, interaction with other services and partner nations and during every opportunity that presents itself. Posters displayed in OES centers, unit areas and during Army leadership conferences are other examples of valuable methods to further emphasize empowerment. The repeated reference and description of empowerment as outlined in this paper will overtime prove essential in advocating, directing and inculcating empowerment into Army culture.

## Conclusion

The value of empowerment as it applies to Army leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is irrefutable and the future success of our Army is clearly dependent on leaders that have been developed overtime to think on their own and make decisions with little to no oversight. Leaders that empower subordinates are critical in developing these traits.

During the conduct of operations in support of the war on terror there is often no other option than to empower subordinates. Current and past examples of junior leaders exercising initiative and making decisions in complex situations are well documented and our Army understands the significant role this fact has as it applies to our current

successes. This paper highlights the requirement to maintain and improve on this success by placing more emphasis on empowerment. In doing so, the Army is investing in the future of the institution and nation.

Now more than ever before the Army has the opportunity to significantly modify leader practices and leader developmental processes. Everyday leaders are confronted with circumstances in which they have a chance to choose to exert influence or oversight within their units. When given that opportunity the decisions they make will impact the development of future Army. This paper advocates surrendering power and authority to subordinates and seeks to convince the Army to officially define empowerment as a critical core competency for the 21<sup>st</sup> century Army leader.

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